



# INTRODUCTION TO WORKING WITH PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES PART I

THE DSS-HRA-DHS NEW HIRES ORIENTATION

# TRAINING GOALS

1. To increase DSS employee knowledge, effectiveness and comfort in working with people with disabilities.
2. Essentially, to learn how to provide good customer service to people with disabilities.

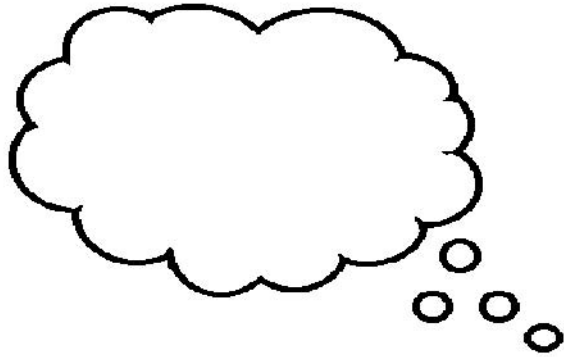
# OBJECTIVES

1. Explore attitudes that can be barriers to working successfully with people with disabilities.
2. Understand our legal requirements regarding services for people with disabilities.
3. Identify appropriate disability language.

If you are public facing:

1. Outline the various types of disabilities Agency workers may encounter in their work.
2. Build appropriate skills to interact with people with disabilities.

## ACTIVITY



What are common stereotypes about people with disabilities?

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# COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS

- **Victim**
- **Objects of pity**
- **Burdens**
- **Villain**
- **Gaming the system**
- **Unable to do things**
- **Childlike**
- **Brave**
- **Inspiring**

AuthenticSpace:

- “Don't call me an inspiration. Be your own damn inspiration.”
- “Right? Brave? Strong? I'm pretty sure I didn't say ‘Hey, universe, make me handicapped.’ There's nothing brave or strong about it. I exist. My strength and courage comes from what I do. Not what I am.”

# DON'T ASSUME!

1. Don't assume that all people with disabilities have the same preferences.
2. Don't assume that people with the same disability have the same abilities or needs.
3. Don't assume that a person with a disability is sick or has an illness.

## ACTIVITY



How do different cultures view disability?

Think about how your own culture views disability.

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# 2015 HRA & 2018 DHS SURVEYS

## HRA

- Less than 50% of public facing staff felt that they had very good or excellent knowledge of reasonable accommodations.
- 70+% of HRA staff wanted more training in serving individuals who:
  - have a mental illness or psychiatric disability;
  - are deaf or hard of hearing;
  - have a speech disability;
  - have a cognitive/learning disability; and
  - are blind or low vision.
- Also, significantly more than half wanted training in Mental Health First Aid, disability etiquette and understanding reasonable accommodations.

## DHS

- Mental health/psychiatric disabilities are encountered most often (“frequently” for 72%), followed by physical/mobility and cognitive/learning disabilities.
- **Two-thirds** of public-facing staff are interested in training on sensory issues and cognitive/learning disability.
- Shelter staff identified positive experiences associated with supporting a person with a disability when they felt that they knew what to do in a situation based on training.

# IT'S ABOUT INDEPENDENCE

Everyone's goals, including people with disabilities, are to:

- be healthy;
- be safe; and
- live an independent and fulfilling life.

DSS's mission, at its core, is to support people in leading healthy, safe, independent and fulfilling lives.

# DISABILITY DOESN'T DISCRIMINATE

- People with disabilities are America's largest minority group, making up 12.8-25% of the population.
- We estimate that 1 in 5 people have a disability.
- It is a minority group that you don't have to be born into.

# BRIEF HISTORY OF ATTITUDINAL BARRIERS

Let's put this in perspective...

If you want to understand today,  
you have to search yesterday.

- Pearl S. Buck



**The Pennsylvania Hospital** (Philadelphia) is the first hospital to create a special section for the treatment of people with disabilities. These patients would be chained to the walls of the basement where the community could pay a fee to come look at them.

1756



Several American cities enacted “**ugly laws**” making it illegal for people with “unsightly or disgusting” disabilities to appear in public. This is one of the most commonly cited, which came from Chicago.

1773

1860s



**The Eastern Lunatic Asylum** (Virginia): the first hospital fully housing people with disabilities was created. It was deemed a place for “those miserable Objects who cannot help themselves.”

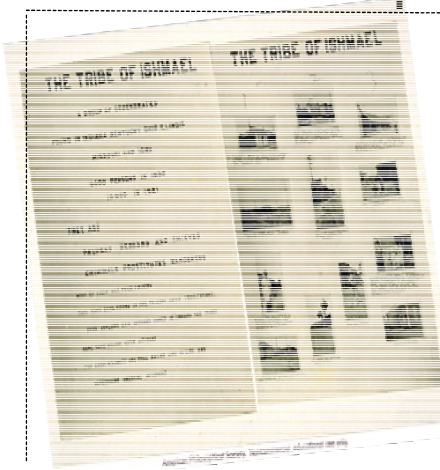


Dr. Harry Haiselden allows a newborn with a disability to perish and promotes this as a way to **reduce the disabled population**. In 1916 the movie "The Black Stork" is produced to further advocate the practice.

1907

1915

1930



Indiana passes the first **eugenic sterilization law**. This resulted in the sterilization of people with mental illness, cognitive disabilities, and epilepsy.



U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt **attempted to hide his disability** (diagnosed with polio at the age of 39).



**Rosemary Kennedy** is lobotomized and two years later sent to the St. Coletta School in Wisconsin. She spent the next 57 years at the school until she passed away at the age of 86.



The **Willowbrook Consent Decree** set important precedents for the humane and ethical treatment of people with developmental disabilities living in institutions.

1941

1970s

1975

1990



Beginning of rights for people with disabilities. This is when the Rehabilitation Act was enacted and when many “Ugly Laws” were finally taken off the books. But it was just the beginning. It has taken years since then to bring us to where we are today.



March 12, 1990: over 1,000 disability rights activists descended on the U.S. Capitol demanding the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act, which had passed the Senate but was delayed in the House.

# DISABILITY RIGHTS MOVEMENT

Some slogans used by the community:

- Pity is not progress.
- Nothing about us, without us.
- Disability Rights are Civil Rights.

# THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA)

- The law was enacted in 1990.
- The goal was to integrate people with disabilities into all aspects of American life.
- Requires public and private entities and government programs and services to not discriminate against people with disabilities.
- Guarantees equal opportunity and access in public housing, employment, transportation, state and local government services and telecommunications.

# DEFINITION OF DISABILITY UNDER THE ADA

- A person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life functions.

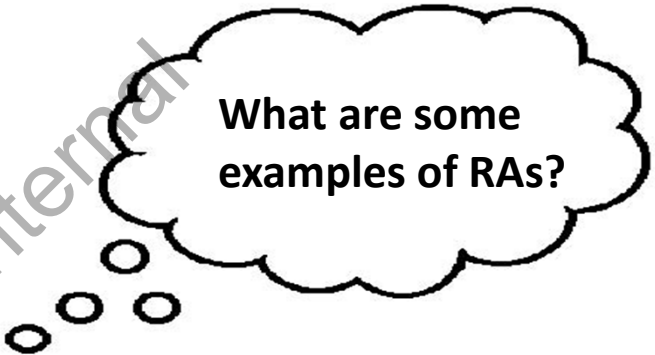
Examples of major life functions: hearing, seeing, speaking, breathing, performing manual tasks, walking, caring for oneself, learning, working.

- A person who has a record of such an impairment.
- A person who is regarded as having such an impairment.

# THE ADA, CONT.

## **Reasonable Accommodation (RA):**

Is any adjustment to the process or environment that allows a person with a disability to access government programs and services.



What are some examples of RAs?

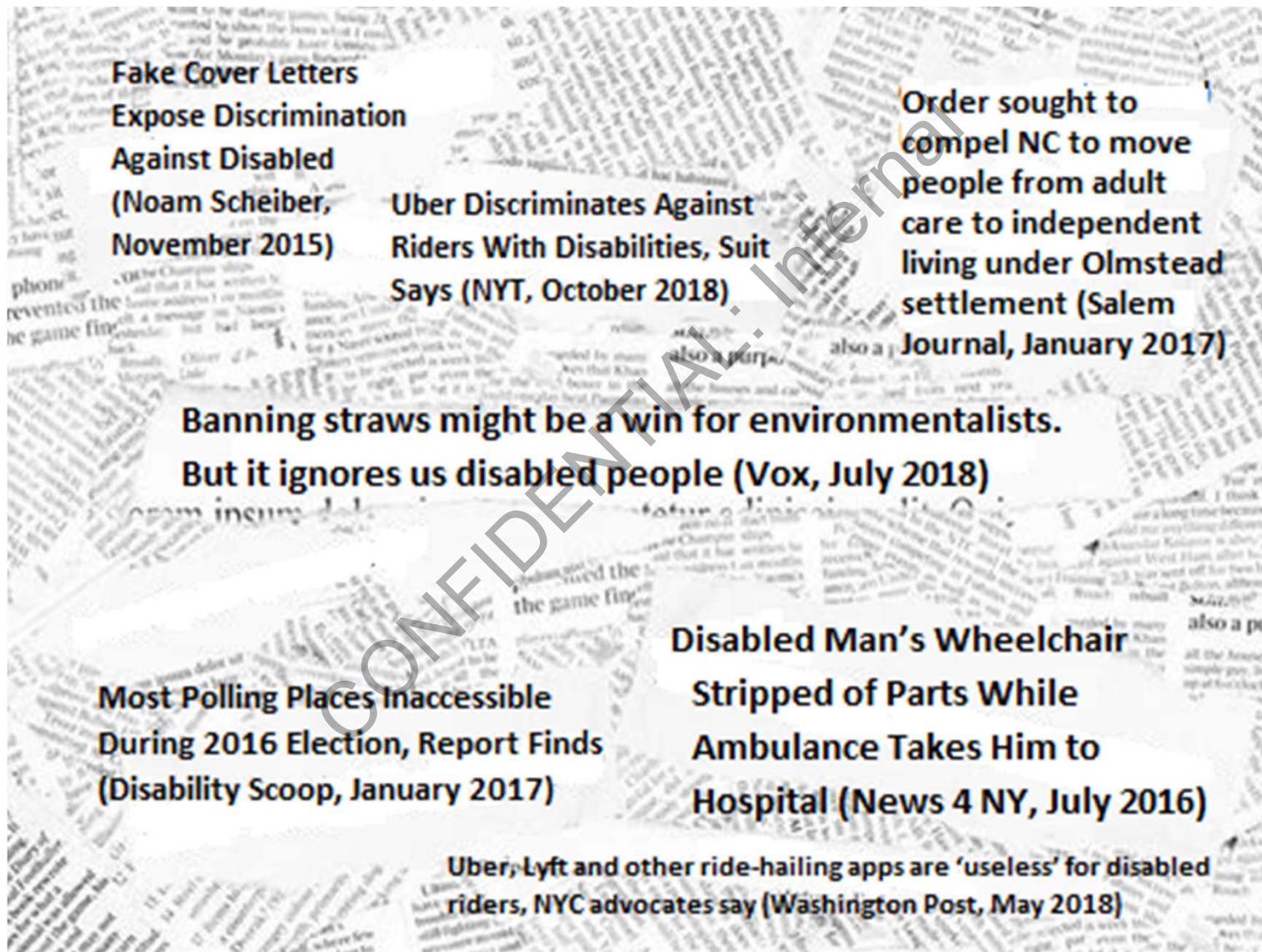
**Reasonable Modification (RM):** To ensure that individuals with disabilities have full access to government facilities, services, programs and activities, governmental agencies are required to: reasonably modify their rules, policies, procedures, and facilities, unless the modification would fundamentally alter the nature of the service, program or activity.

# OTHER LEGAL PROTECTIONS

Be aware that there are other federal, state and local laws that protect individuals with disabilities from discrimination, retaliation and segregation, including:

- Architectural Barriers Act of 1968
- Fair Housing Act of 1968 (amended 1988)
- The Rehabilitation Act of 1973
- The 1975 Public Law 94-142 (now IDEA)
- NYC Human Rights Law

# TODAY: CONTINUED DISCRIMINATION



# CURRENT BARRIERS



- Education
- Income and Poverty
- Employment
- Health Coverage
- Food
- Housing
- Marriage and family
- Transportation
- Access to Services

# HOUSING DATA

Housing Market Area	SSI Monthly Payment	SSI as % of Median Income	% SSI for 1BR Apt.	% SSI for Efficiency Apt.	Year
New York	\$820	15.5%	173%	165%	2016
Statewide	\$820	19.4%	145%	131%	2016

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# TRAVELING IN NYC

ADA-accessible stations

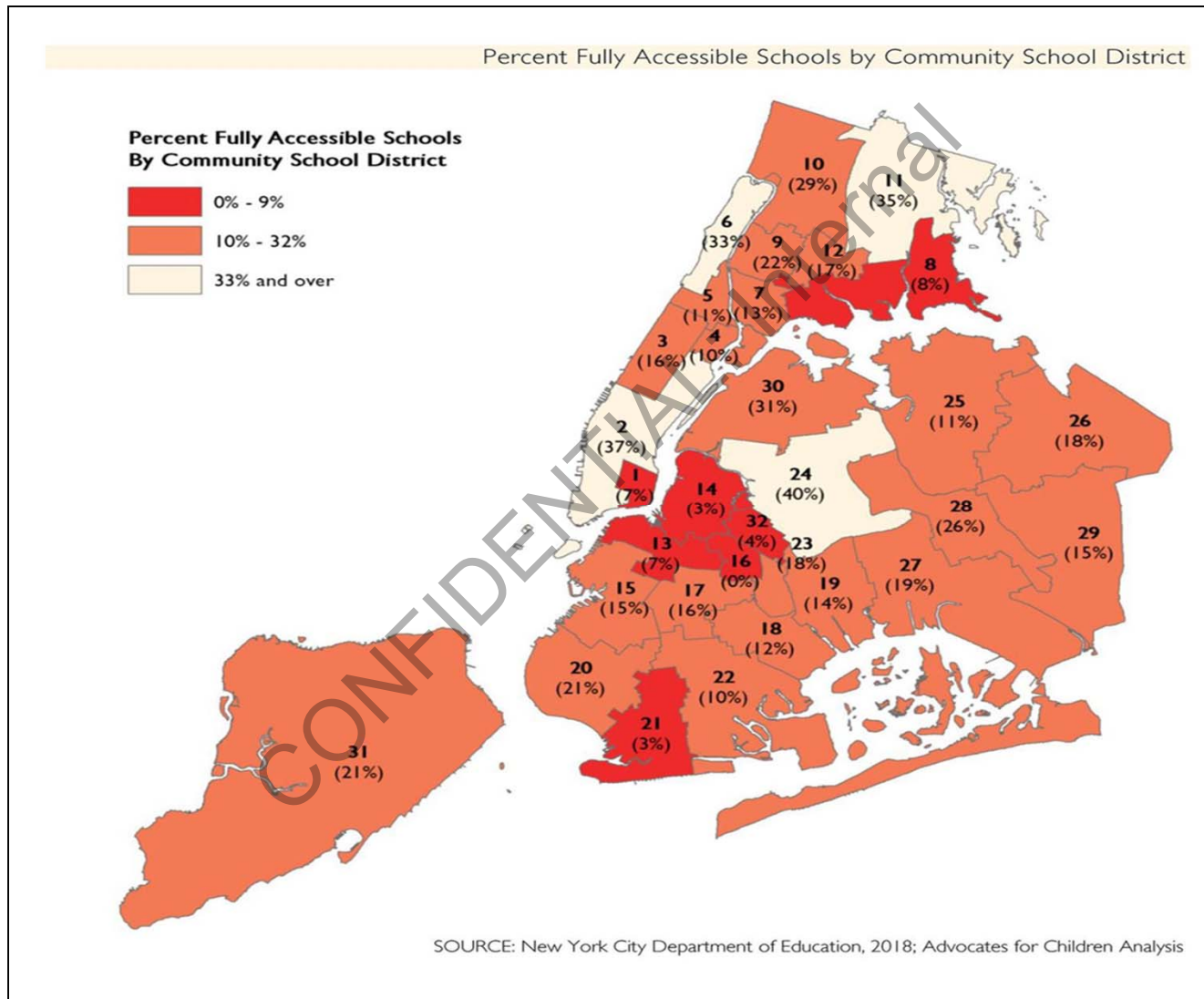


The subway map you're used to



119 out of 422 stations are ADA-accessible

# ATTENDING SCHOOL IN NYC



# CRIME DATA

A person with a disability is more likely than the average person to be a victim of a violent crime by a person that knows them well or by a casual acquaintance.

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# ADDITIONAL DATA

According to the U.S. Department of Labor:

- More than 1/3 of people on TANF have a disability.
- Disability is both a cause of poverty and a consequence of poverty.
- They are 3x more likely to have extreme difficulty paying bills.
- They are 2x more likely to skip medical treatment.

# THE BASICS

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## BIG PICTURE TAKEAWAY

How do you treat a person  
with a disability?

...like a person


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# LANGUAGE

“Language is power. Our words have the power to inspire, motivate, and uplift people. They also have the power to hurt, isolate and oppress individuals or entire segments of society.”

“Change your language and you change your thoughts.”

# PEOPLE-FIRST LANGUAGE

- Avoid referring to people with disabilities as "the disabled," "the blind," "the mentally ill."
  - Descriptive terms should be used as adjectives, not as nouns.
    - Say "person with a disability"
    - Say "people with disabilities"
    - For specific disabilities, say "people who have cerebral palsy" or a "person who is blind."
  - Remember, disability doesn't define the person.
- 

# WHY ARE THESE WORDS OUTDATED?

- invalid
- victim of
- suffers from/  
afflicted  
with/ stricken  
with
- crippled
- wheelchair  
bound
- deaf and  
dumb
- deaf mute
- special  
person/  
differently-  
abled/  
physically  
challenged/  
special needs
- handicapped
- retarded



# DISABILITY ETIQUETTE

## Why do it?

Remember:

- If you are not sure what words to use...just ask the person.
- Attitude speaks volumes!
- Relax.
- Be nice.
- Disability etiquette is about good customer service.

# SENSITIVITY TRAINING VIDEO

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gv1aDEFIXq8>

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# REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS

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# REQUESTING AN REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION

Remember: a **Reasonable Accommodation** is any adjustment to the process or environment that allows a person with a disability to access government programs and services.

**HRA: use the Help  
for People with  
Disabilities (HRA-  
102-c form)**

**DHS: use the  
Reasonable  
Accommodation  
Request Form  
(DHS-13 form)**

# WHERE TO FIND FORMS AND POLICIES PERTAINING TO DISABILITIES

- E-docs
- Intranet (both DHS and HRA)
- Internet

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# EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

- The ADA requires that title II entities (State and local governments) and title III entities (businesses and nonprofit organizations that serve the public) communicate effectively with people who have communication disabilities.
- The goal is to ensure that communication with people with these disabilities is equally effective as communication with people without disabilities.

# SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETATION

If someone needs a sign language interpreter, you **MUST always:**

offer to provide one (follow your site's process):

- In person
- Via VRI (video remote interpreting)
- Or Schedule a return appointment, if they prefer

**Never:** Use a minor child to interpret!\*

# ALTERNATIVE FORMATS FOR PEOPLE WHO ARE BLIND OR LOW VISION

- Large Print (18-point font)
- Audio Format
- Data Format
- Braille



# PLAIN LANGUAGE/ READABILITY

- When writing for the public, try to use a reading level no higher than the 6th grade.
- Here are ways to test yourself:
  - <http://www.hemingwayapp.com/>
  - Through Readability Statistics in Microsoft Word

# WEB, PRINT AND PAPER

HRA has guidelines for web, print and plain language for those of you who develop web content, brochures or notices.

To access the City's Toolkit:

<https://www1.nyc.gov/site/process/content/creating-accessible-content.page>

If you are assisting someone in writing, be aware that:

- Simple and to the point is better.
- The more people comprehend, the more likely they will follow through.

# COGNITIVE DISABILITIES

- Use clear and specific language and short sentences. One to two step directions are best.
- Allow for different styles of processing information.
- Repeat questions in a different way to verify responses.

# IN GENERAL

- Ask everyone at the end of an interview: OK, what's the next thing you have to do?
- Clearly and simply write down next steps and/or use a highlighter to highlight key information.
- Ask them if they have someone to help them with paperwork or remembering appointments. If so, encourage them to give that person information and provide an extra copy.

# PHYSICAL SPACE



- Know where accessible entrances, exits and restrooms are located within your work area.
- Keep paths clear in buildings and outside.
- Keep ramps and accessible doors to your facility open and unblocked.
- Think about access whenever spaces are being altered.
- Let your supervisor know if there is an access issue.
- Any TV set should have open captioning.

# PUBLIC MEETINGS

Reminder: advertising and other materials pertaining to public events must include information regarding accessibility for people with disabilities.



# SPECIAL SECTION ON SERVICE ANIMALS

Per ADA:

- A service animal is a dog individually trained to do work or perform tasks for a person with a disability.
- The task performed must be directly related to the person's disability.
- If they meet this definition, animals are considered service animals under the ADA regardless of whether they have been licensed or certified by a state or local government.

# SERVICE ANIMALS, CONT.

Some of the ways that service animals assist people with disabilities:

- Assisting with navigation, stability or balance
- Alerting people to sounds or allergens
- Pulling wheelchairs or carrying and picking up items
- Interrupting impulsive or destructive behaviors

# SERVICE ANIMALS, CONT.

- A SERVICE ANIMAL IS NOT A PET – do not touch or pet service dogs.
- They are allowed in all public areas.
- Some are licensed or certified and have id papers.  
**You cannot ask for proof.**
- In most instances, the service animal should have a harness or a leash.
- The person is responsible for caring for the animal.
- Don't separate the person from the service animal.

## SERVICE ANIMALS, CONT.

You can ask two questions (in this order):

1. Is the animal required because of a disability?
2. What work has the animal been trained to perform?



# SERVICE ANIMALS, CONT.

What else do you need to know?

The only circumstances in which you can exclude a service animal:

- The animal's behavior poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others.
- They are out of control or not housebroken.

# LOVELY H. LAWSUIT BACKGROUND

- Lovely H. is a class action lawsuit which was brought in part to challenge HRA's process for providing reasonable accommodations to class members. Class members include clients who were referred to WeCARE and those that have Home Visit Needed status.
- The settlement dictates specific processes for the handling of reasonable accommodations. HRA clients with disabilities are entitled to reasonable accommodations to assist them in applying for, receiving, and participating in all HRA benefits, services, and programs, in a manner that does not discriminate against them because of their disabilities.

# BUTLER LAWSUIT BACKGROUND

- “Butler” is a class action lawsuit brought against the NYC DHS alleging violations of the ADA. The lawsuit alleged DHS has failed to, or improperly, provide reasonable accommodations to people with disabilities in the eligibility process and in the receipt of shelter and shelter services.
- Following significant negotiations, DHS and Plaintiffs entered into a wide-ranging settlement of the class action (“Butler Settlement”), which entails reviews, alterations and updates in DHS policy and practice in order to better serve people with disabilities. The Butler Settlement defines “Class Members” as individuals with a disability that seek or receive DHS shelter or shelter related services.

# OTHER LAWSUITS

## **Rafferty Lawsuit:**

A class action lawsuit representing people who are blind and low vision involving:

- HRA
- New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA)
- New York State Department of Health (SDOH)

As a result of Rafferty, HRA, OTDA and SDOH are required to provide (among other things) certain notices and forms in alternative formats.

## **DHS Auxiliary Aids Consent Decree:**

As a result of this Consent Decree and Judgment, the City of New York must take steps to ensure that DHS shelter clients or applicants who are deaf or have hearing loss are able to effectively communicate with staff, and are sheltered in accessible units.



# INVISIBLE DISABILITIES

- What are examples of disabilities that can be invisible or hidden?
- Do you know someone who has a hidden disability? What challenges have they faced?
- What are situations that might be challenging for a person with a hidden disability as they try to access or participate your program?

# SCENARIOS

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# SCENARIO 1

A person informs you that the job center he is assigned to requires him to take two buses and walk 10 blocks and another job center closer to his home only requires him to take a 20 minute subway ride and the subway stop is a block from the center. He also states that he has COPD and suffers from shortness of breath and has problems standing for long periods of time. What RAs would you offer?

Possible RAs:

- Center Transfer
- Shorter Wait Times

# SCENARIO 2

A family arrives at PATH (Shelter Intake for Families with Children) with a Pomeranian on a leash. What questions do you ask?

1. Is the animal required because of a disability?

Answer: Yes

2. What work has the animal been trained to perform?

Answer A: Our daughter has seizures. The dog lets her know when she's about to have one so that she sits down.

Answer B: Our daughter gets anxious and the dog keeps her calm.

Possible RAs:

- Service Animal (automatic)
- Emotional Support Animal

# SCENARIO 3

You get a call from a person who informs you she has been recently diagnosed with breast cancer and has started chemotherapy once a week. What RA can be offered?

Possible RAs:

- Home Visit Needed/Homebound Status (HVN/HB)
- No appointments while waiting for Access-A-Ride approval
- Shorter wait times
- Flexible scheduling

# SCENARIO 4

You get a call from a person who has Parkinson's Disease and has specialized treatment in the Bronx approximately 3 times a week. He's currently in a Single Men's Shelter in Brooklyn. It takes him 2 hours to get there by public transportation. What RA(s) can be considered?

Possible RAs:

- Medical or disabling condition requiring placement in a particular geographic location
- Can also help applying for Access-A-Ride
- Can temporarily provide transportation

# SCENARIO 5

During an interview, the Cash Assistance applicant informs you she has panic attacks and had a hard time coming in on the train this morning with the crowds. What RA can be offered?

Possible RAs:

- No appointments during rush hours
- Shorter wait times

# SCENARIO 6

A couple enters AFIC (Adult Families Intake) and they are both deaf. You show them the Language Card and they point to the sign language interpreter symbol.

Possible RAs:

- ASL Interpretation by VRI
- In-Person ASL interpretation

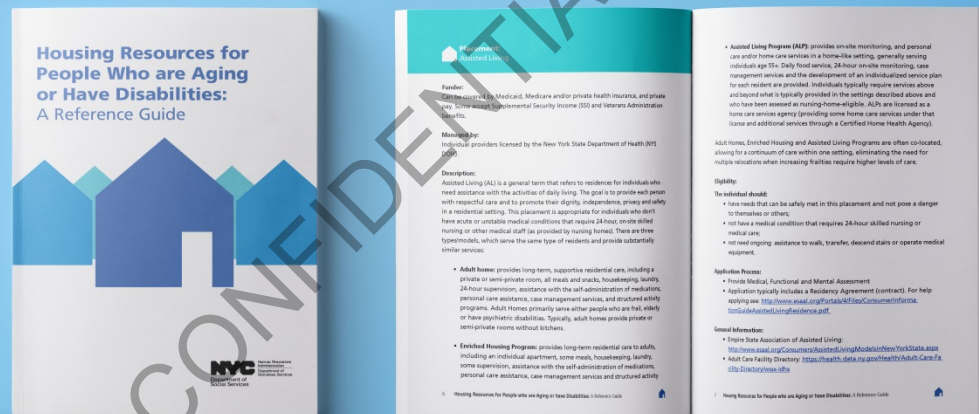
# ALWAYS KEEP IN MIND...

- Confidentiality
- Be respectful and professional
- A good attitude goes a long way
- Inclusion starts with you!

# RESOURCES

- United Spinal Association's Tips on Interacting with People with Disabilities  
<http://www.unitedspinal.org/disability-etiquette/>
- The New York City Department of Small Business Services' Disability Etiquette Handbook  
[http://www.nyc.gov/html/sbs/downloads/pdf/eo\\_wia/WIA\\_Disability\\_Etiquette\\_Handbook.pdf](http://www.nyc.gov/html/sbs/downloads/pdf/eo_wia/WIA_Disability_Etiquette_Handbook.pdf)
- DSS's Office of Disability Affairs:  
[disabilityaffairs@dss.nyc.gov](mailto:disabilityaffairs@dss.nyc.gov)

# HOUSING RESOURCES FOR PEOPLE WHO ARE AGING OR HAVE DISABILITIES: A REFERENCE GUIDE



# SOME TRAINING SOURCES

Content of some slides generously borrowed from:

- Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities (MOPD) Tips for Interacting with People with Various Disabilities - 2014
- The Center for Excellence in Disabilities, Morgantown, West Virginia (part of the Robert C. Byrd Health Sciences Center at West Virginia University)

# DSS DISABILITY ACCESS & FUNCTIONAL NEEDS SHELTER COORDINATOR

If you are interested in serving as a Disability Access & Functional Needs (DAFN) Coordinator for HRA during emergencies, please send an email along with your home zip code to:

Janel Cloyd of Crisis & Disaster Management

[cloydj@dss.nyc.gov](mailto:cloydj@dss.nyc.gov)

(929) 221-7362

A future training session will be given to provide information and discuss roles and responsibilities.

# PARTNERSHIP FOR INCLUSIVE INTERNSHIPS

Are you interested in an intern or  
volunteer with a disability?

Contact us to find out how:  
[disabilityAffairs@dss.nyc.gov](mailto:disabilityAffairs@dss.nyc.gov)

# ANY QUESTIONS?



# THANK YOU! PLEASE COMPLETE THE EVALUATION FORM.

- At Your Service video

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